serve about one million subscribers by the year 2000. The estimated cost for setting up National Internet Backbone alongwith equipments for the 45 nodes is Rs. 86.00 crores approximately which is to be met from Internal Finance of DOT.

(e) By the end of December, 1999.

STD/ISD/PCO Facilities in Rural Areas of Gujarat

1434. SHRIMATI URMILABEN CHIMANBHAI PATEL: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the ISD/STD/PCO facilities have been extended in all the rural areas of Gujarat;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) by what time these facilities will be made available to those rural areas where the facilities have not been extended?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA): (a) to (c) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House as soon as possible.

Opening of Post Offices in remote tribal areas

1435. SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of Post Offices in the country at present;

(b) the average population of the country covered by one Post Office;

(c) whether Government propose to open more Post Offices;

(d) if so, the details in this regard; and

(e) whether Government propose to open more Post Offices in remote tribal areas of the country; if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA): (a) The total number of post offices in the country is 153454.

(b) The average population of the country covered by one post office is 5502.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) There is a target for opening 598 Extra Departmental Branch Post Offices and 50 Departmental Sub-Post Offices throughout the country during the Annual Plan 1998-99, subject to justification and availability of resources.

(e) Yes, Sir. During the Annual Plan 1998-99, there is a target for opening 148 Extra Departmental Branch Post Offices and 9 Departmental Sub-Post Offices in the tribal areas of the country, subject to norm based justification and availability of resources.

Telephone faults

1436. SHRI KULDIP NAYYAR: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) on an average how many complaints of telephone faults are registered per day with the Exchanges in Delhi;

(b) how much time is normally spent to rectify one fault; and

(c) whether any lineman or other telephone employee had been punished during the last year for not doing his duty quickly?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA): (a) In MTNL, Delhi on an average sixteen thousand complaints are booked every day.

(b) About 72.5% faults are cleared within the norms i.e. 48 hours. The average duration for clearance of a fault is about 41 hours.

(c) Disciplinary proceedings against 9 officials have been initiated and officials including two Gazetted Officers have been given warning.

Overacharing by PCOs

1437. SHRI KULDIP NAYYAR: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that PCOs in Delhi charge Rs. 2/- per call instead of Rs. 1.50 p allowed by the Department;

(b) whether any checking has been done so far; and

(c) if so, whether any action has been taken against those PCO's who overcharge?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA): (a) to (c) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House as soon as possible.

Reduction of rental and registration fee for rural telephone subscribers

1438. SHRI SURESH KALMADI: Will the Minister of COM MUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government has reduced the registration fee as well as rentals for rural telephones subscribers;

(b) if so, the details of reduction; and

(c) whether similar reduction is contemplated to be allowed for urban subscribers also?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA): (a) and (b) Due to redefinition of local area with effect from 15.8.98 (which gave certain advantages to consumers), there was however, a consequential increase in rental and registration charges in case of some subscribers from a lower slab to a higher slab. As it resulted in financial burden on rural subscribers, it has been decided to restore the rentals and registration charges as applicable prior to 15.8.98 in respect of rural subscribers only.

(c) There is no such proposal.

Priorities laid down for utilisation of funds raised through Resurgent India Bonds

1439. SHRI GOVINDRAO ADIK: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have reviewed the position regarding utilisation of funds mobilised under Resurgent India Bonds (RIB) Scheme;

(b) if so, the details thereof as per guidelines laid down;

(c) what are observations of the Standing Committee on Finance in the matter; and

(d) the details of reaction of Government thereof?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): (a) and (b) While giving approval for exchange rist guarantee for Resurgent India Bonds, it was stipulated that 40% .of the total rupee equivalent of the resources raised shall be invested by the State Bank of India in Government securities and the remaining amount will be utilised substantially for supporting the financial needs of the Infrastructure Sector. This will be reviewed once in a year.

(c) and (d) This matter has not been referred to or considered by the Standing Committee on Finance.

Review of performance of Oleopine Resin, Turpentine and Camphor industry

1440. SHRI GOVINDRAO ADIK: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state: